Delivering the Goods: Internet Delivery of Printed Material

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Background. Though access to information has become more electronically oriented, actual transmission of the documents has not. Electronic request systems such as DOCLINE from the National Library of Medicine and OCLC have been available for a number of years. Delivery systems were mainly the postal system and fax transmission. Until recently, other systems did not exist.

ARIEL, from the Research Libraries Group, provides for Internet delivery of print material. However, until the recent update, ARIEL was a library to library transfer medium. The recent update to ARIEL provides for delivery to the end user as does DocView from the National Library of Medicine. Unfortunately, these solutions are Mime-compliant e-mail based. The end user still must have the expertise to load the resulting documents into the appropriate readers. Further, the documents are rather large files and must be completely downloaded before they can be viewed.

Project Description. Web-EDD, a system developed at the Marshall University School of Medicine, is an attempt to provide an integrated, user friendly interface to request, receive, view, and locally print documents. An interface style similar to browsers currently used of the World Wide Web was chosen to minimize or eliminate additional training of both the end users and library staff.

The process begins with accessing the Web-EDD link from the library home page. The user must have an account with the library. This provides the library with accurate billing information. The user may then make a request for a journal article of other document, view completed requests, or print completed requests.

Making requests involves filling in a request form. The user has the opportunity to specify the delivery method, Web-EDD, fax, or mail. Enhancements are planned which will allow pasting in results from literature searches. Requests are handled by the library staff in a number of ways. If the item is in the library collection, the item is scanned. The program places the file in the proper user area. If the item is received via ARIEL, the ARIEL file is placed in the user area. If the item is received as a photocopy, the item will usually be mailed. The user specified delivery method will always take precedence. Web-EDD will generate an e-mail message to notify the user their request is filled.

The end user will not need to launch another viewer to read their documents. The Web-EDD system is a stand-alone document viewer and printer. Even though the documents are multi-page TIFF files, viewing is possible without downloading the fairly large TIFF file. Rather, Web-EDD takes advantage of WinFrame technology to only pass to the end user an image if the part of the screen being viewed. The actual file handling is done on the document server. Only when the document is to be printed is the actual multi-page TIFF file transferred. This eliminates the bottleneck common to other delivery methods.

Considerations. Security must be maintained to insure the user does not access other users' documents. This is done by having the user log in to Web-EDD. This also has the effect of enforcing compliance with the copyright laws. Only one copy of a document is available to the proper user. The document, once viewed, will be deleted from Web-EDD after a set time.

In using the Internet to provide this service, the user is freed from accessing a particular computer system. Access via Internet can be from any computer with an Internet connection, whether next door or across the country.

References

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